

## **SPECIMEN SUBMISSION PROTOCOL FOR RABIES TESTING AT NORFOLK DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH (NDPH)**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR THE SERVICE**

NDPH provides laboratory testing support to local or regional agencies to identify risk and assist in the prevention of rabies in animals and humans. The submitter is responsible for collecting and submitting the appropriate specimens for testing with completed submission forms. The laboratory receives, processes, tests, and reports results to the local health department or a submitting agency authorized by the district health director (i.e. local animal control agencies, veterinarians, etc.) The laboratory does not provide test results and/or interpretation to animal owners, individuals who may have been exposed to an infected animal, or owners of animals that require post exposure management.

### **Report**

- All positive results are telephoned directly to the local health department or the authorized submitting agency.

### **Contact Information**

<b>Main Laboratory</b>	<b>757-683-2746</b>
<b>Emergency Pager</b>	<b>757-669-2409</b>

### **Turnaround Time**

- Specimens received by 2:00 p.m. (Monday–Friday) will be tested and reported on the same day of delivery. **A telephone number must be supplied for after hours or emergency contact for reporting positive results.**
- Emergency testing (including nights, weekends, holidays and human exposure) will require authorization from a District Health Director. On notification the laboratory personnel on call will process the specimen and report result according to the special arrangement.

### **Proficiency and Training**

Members of the NDPH Laboratory rabies testing team received training through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention laboratory training program. The laboratory participates in the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene Proficiency Testing Program for Rabies. NDPH Laboratory maintains communications with the Virginia Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services in Richmond, VA, and the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology.

## SPECIMEN COLLECTION CRITERIA

- A live animal will not be accepted by the laboratory.
- The animal should be humanely euthanized without damage to the head. The head must then be removed from the body and submitted intact for examination.
- The entire body of small animals such as bats, mice, squirrels, etc. should be submitted.
- **Bats:** All bats captured alive must be euthanized with ½ -1 cc of sodium pentobarbital (intraperitoneal, IP) before being transported to the laboratory. The method of euthanasia and the person who administered it must be recorded on submission paperwork.

## SPECIMENS SUBMISSION AND PACKAGING CRITERIA

- All materials collected for rabies diagnosis are to be considered infectious, and appropriate handling and shipping precautions should be taken in order to assure the safety of the collector/submitter, transportation carriers, laboratory staff and the public at large in accordance with 49 CFR Department of Transportation Regulations.
- In order to kill fleas and ticks, a tissue or blotting paper sprayed with a pesticide should be placed into the bag with the specimen. Then the bag must be closed tightly prior to transport.
- Specimens should be kept cold and transported to the laboratory promptly to reduce decomposition of the animals. When transporting **use frozen cold packs only**. Do not use “wet” ice. “Wet” ice may leak through the container possibly causing rejection of specimen for testing.
- Keep the specimen cold but not frozen. A frozen specimen will delay testing; possibly one full day. (A fresh, unfixed brain sample is critical to a rapid and accurate diagnosis of rabies. Refrigeration will preserve a sample for at least 48 hours. Freezing of the sample for transit will not reduce the sensitivity of the test, but may introduce additional testing delays and impede recognition and dissection of appropriate tests samples. Repeated freeze-thaw cycles may reduce test sensitivity and should be avoided.)
- Biocontainment during specimen transport is critical, to prevent both contamination of the outside of the package and cross-contamination between samples within the package. When packaging rabies specimens, wear disposable gloves, mask and safety glasses or goggles.
- Specimens **must** be triple packaged as:
  - A tightly sealed primary container (ziplock or heavy duty plastic bag with enough absorbent material to contain blood and body fluids)
  - A sealed secondary container (heavy duty plastic bag, paint can or plastic pail with lid) with submission form (enclosed in sealed plastic bag) taped to secondary container
  - A tightly sealed rigid outer container such as a cooler or thick-walled insulated box.
- All diagnostic specimens must be clearly labeled with a health department or animal control internal number or identifier and the animal species.

- Deliver the package along with the appropriate paper work to:

**Norfolk Department of Public Health  
Bureau of Laboratories  
830 Southampton Avenue  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
Phone: 757-683-2746**

During business hours, deliver to the laboratory room 3004.

During non-business hours, the laboratorian must be contacted by pager or phone with an estimated time of arrival, and then the submitter / transporter will be met at security desk.

## **REFERENCE**

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/od/ohs/pdffiles/DOTHazMat8-14-02.pdf>

<http://www.vdh.state.va.us/epi/rabies.asp>